



Bernard C. "Jack" Young
Mayor

COMMISSION FOR
HISTORICAL & ARCHITECTURAL
PRESERVATION

Tom Liebel, Chairman

DRAFT STAFF REPORT



Chris Ryer
Director

October 13, 2020

REQUEST: Construct two-story rear addition with roof deck

ADDRESS: 444 Grindall Street (Federal Hill Historic District)

APPLICANT: Charles George, Architect

OWNER: 12island LLC

STAFF: Walter W. Gallas, AICP

RECOMMENDATION: Approval

SITE/HISTORIC DISTRICT

General Area: The property is located in the Federal Hill Historic District on the north side of Grindall Street in a block bounded by Riverside Avenue on the west, East Hamburg Street on the north, and Covington Street on the east. (*Images 1-2*). Comprising about 24 city blocks with street names retained from its original settlement, Federal Hill is located just south of the Inner Harbor. At its northeast corner, Federal Hill Park rises steeply from Key Highway overlooking the downtown skyline. The neighborhood retains intact streets of largely residential properties reflecting the eras in which they were built and the economic status of their early residents.

Site Conditions: The existing property is a two-bay two-story masonry rowhouse end unit in a group of five rowhouses lining the north side of Grindall Street between Covington Street and Riverside Avenue. The row is set back from the street atop a steep incline with a substantial stone retaining wall at the sidewalk. Unlike its four neighbors to the west, which have elaborate roof cornices with fretwork and brackets, 444 Grindall has a simple cornice with brackets at each end. The original porches are no longer present (*Images 3-5*).

In 1890, according to the Sanborn map, the land on which 444 Grindall Street stands today was part of a large undeveloped piece of land on the north side of the street and south of houses lining E. Hamburg Street to the north (*Image 6*). Within ten years, the land was subdivided and eight rowhouses were built, as can be seen in the 1901-1902 Sanborn map. The buildings were numbered 402 to 416 Grindall Street, with the house of this application being 410 Grindall Street—three houses in from the east end (*Image 7*). A permit notice in the October 3, 1905, issue of *The Sun* shows that a permit was issued to H. Wessell & Son "To tear down three structures at 412-416 Grindall street." What happened to cause these three buildings to be demolished isn't known. Staff could find no news accounts mentioning any

event at this site that would have precipitated the action. A fire is one possibility or instability of the terrain. In any case, by 1914-1915, 410 Grindall Street (today's 444 Grindall) was the end unit (*Image 8*). At some point the street numbering was changed, as reflected in the 1914-1953 Sanborn map (*Image 9*).

BACKGROUND

Under the prior owner and before Federal Hill's local historic district designation, plans had been approved to reconstruct wooden porches with Victorian style wooden brackets and metal porch railings.

In 2019, after local district designation and under the prior owner, the property was cited for erecting and never removing construction scaffolding and constructing a loading dock at the street without approval. Other than some decking, which remains, the porches were never completed.

This is the first application to CHAP by the current owner.

PROPOSAL & APPLICATION OF GUIDELINES

This application is a request to construct a two-story addition at the rear, incorporating an existing one-story addition. The addition would have a 16'-0" x 13'-2 1/2" rooftop deck. The addition and the rooftop deck would not be visible from the street. At the front, new porch steps will be added, as well as new steps to the house from the sidewalk. The porch and steps have been reviewed and approved at staff level, and so are not a part of this report (*Images 10-17*).

Staff applied the following guidelines from the *Baltimore City Historic Preservation Design Guidelines*:

1.18 Alterations and Additions

- Design alterations and additions to be compatible and sympathetic to the character of the historic building.

2.1 Guiding Principles for New Design

- Avoid demolishing historic buildings, structures, and landscapes when designing new construction projects.
- Contemporary architectural design that reflects its current time, place, use, and culture is accepted, provided that the design is compatible with the character of the historic district.

2.2 Site Design

- Retain established property line patterns, street and alley widths, setbacks, primary and secondary building orientation, and landscape elements.

2.3 Scale and Form

- The scale and form of new buildings must be compatible with the height and depth of surrounding buildings. Where there is a variation of building height within the

immediate neighborhood, the new building should generally relate to the predominant pattern.

2.4.5 Roofs

- Design new roofs to complement the orientation, pitch, complexity, and scale of roofs on surrounding buildings.

2.5.1 Doors and Windows

- Design doors and windows to be compatible with the placement, scale, type, and operation of doors and windows and their openings in surrounding buildings.

2.5.2 Materials

- Choose building materials that are compatible with the color, size, texture, scale, and quality of building materials used in surrounding buildings.
- Cover and finish exterior wall with quality materials that are compatible with surrounding buildings.

1.8.9 Roof Decks

- Where permitted, new roof decks must not be visible from the street-front grade along any primary elevation. Locate roof decks at the rear of a building whenever possible to minimize visibility.
- Provide access to roof decks from the rear of the property whenever possible. Do not construct rooftop pop-ups or doghouses to access roof decks.

APPLICATION OF GUIDELINES

1.18 Alterations and Additions – The proposal is compatible with the historic building. It is not visible from the public right-of-way, so meets the guidelines.

2.1 Guiding Principles for New Design – The addition is not attempting to mimic a historic style, nor to call attention to itself. It is a simple contemporary design with flat roof, and therefore meets the guidelines.

2.2 Site Design – The siting of the addition meets the guidelines.

2.3 Scale and Form – The interior floor-to-ceiling height of the first floor of the addition is 8'-1 1/2". The second floor height is 9'-1 1/4". The scale of the addition is appropriate and meets the guidelines.

2.4.5 Roofs – The existing house has a flat roof as does the addition, and so meets the design guideline for compatibility to roof forms in the neighborhood.

2.5.1 Doors and Windows – The doors and windows of the rear addition meet the design guidelines. The doors will be wood with glass half-lights. The windows will be Andersen windows made of Fibrex, a composite material. As these windows are proposed for the rear elevation, the doors and windows meet the design guidelines.

2.5.2 Materials – The CMU masonry of the east and west elevations of the existing one-story addition will be retained. The new construction of the addition at the expanded first floor and new second floor will be clad in Portland cement stucco. The materials meet the guidelines.

1.8.9 Roof Decks – The roof deck will be set back 34' from the front edge of the house. It will have a simple wood railing. Access will be provided by exterior spiral stairs coming up from the new balcony at the second floor. No access structure or doghouse will be on the roof itself. It will not be visible from the street. The roof deck meets the design guidelines.

NEIGHBORHOOD COMMENTS

The Federal Hill Architectural Review Committee supports the application.

ANALYSIS

This design represents the architect's response to staff feedback on earlier plans. With the revisions, CHAP staff has determined that the design for the two-story rear addition with roof top deck meets all of the CHAP design guidelines.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval.



Eric Holcomb, Director

MAPS AND IMAGES

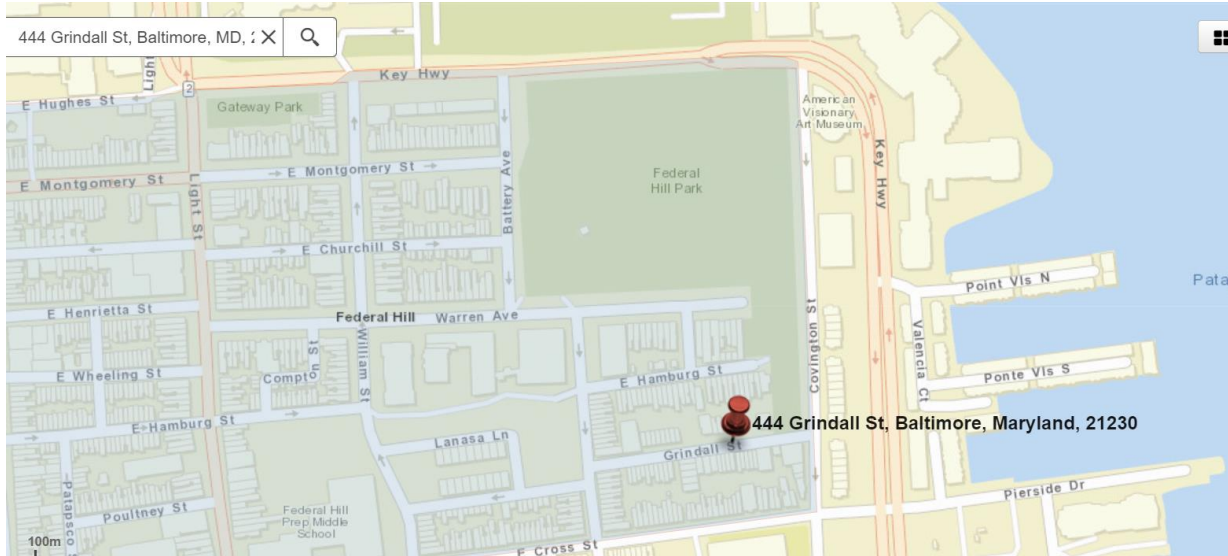


Image 1: 444 Grindall Street in the Federal Hill Historic District.

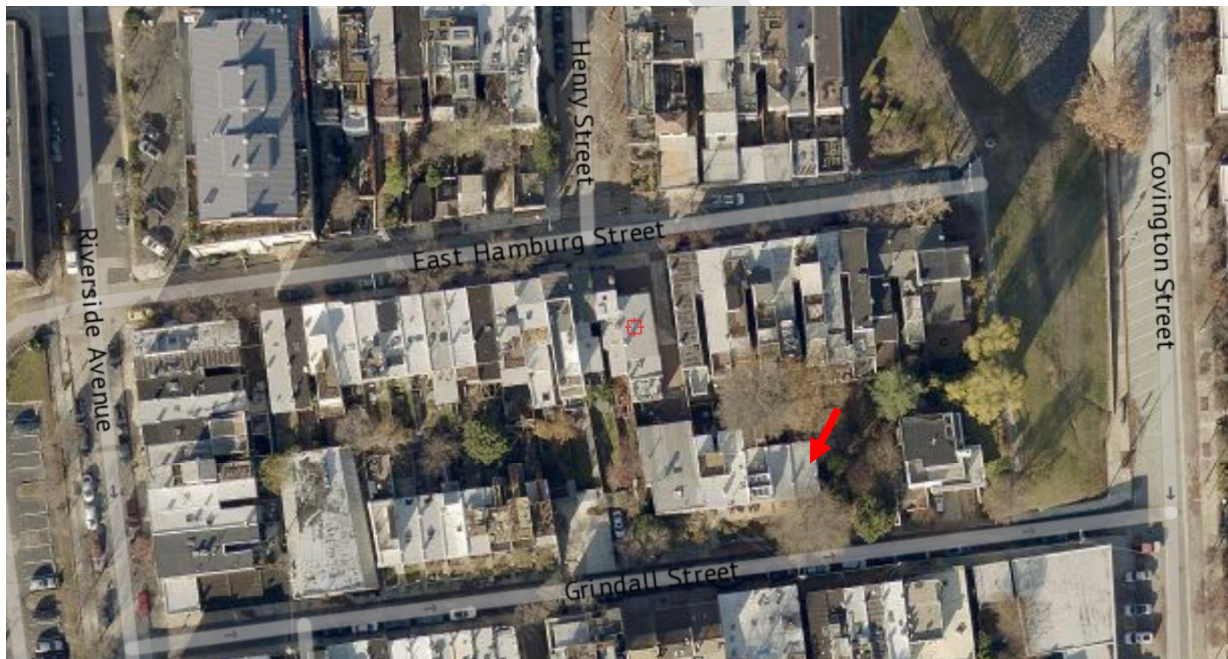


Image 2: Overhead view of 444 Grindall Street (arrow), December 11, 2019



Image 3: 444 Grindall Street (arrow), September 27, 2020



Image 4: 444 Grindall Street, front elevation – Existing conditions



Image 5: 444 Grindall Street, front elevation – Existing conditions

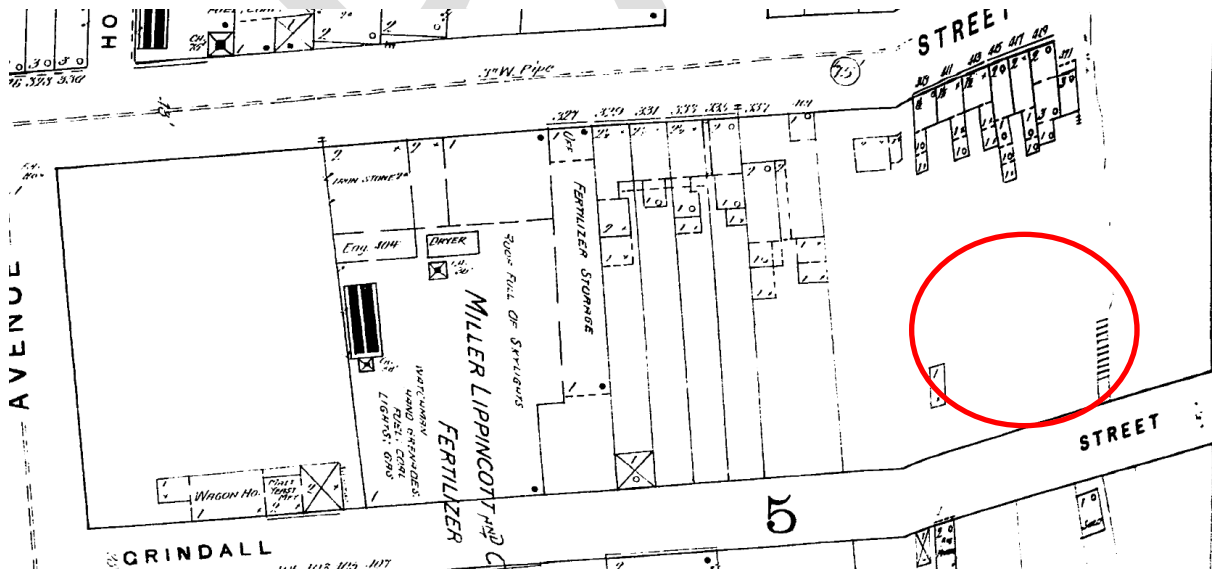


Image 6: 400 block of Grindall Street, 1890 Sanborn map

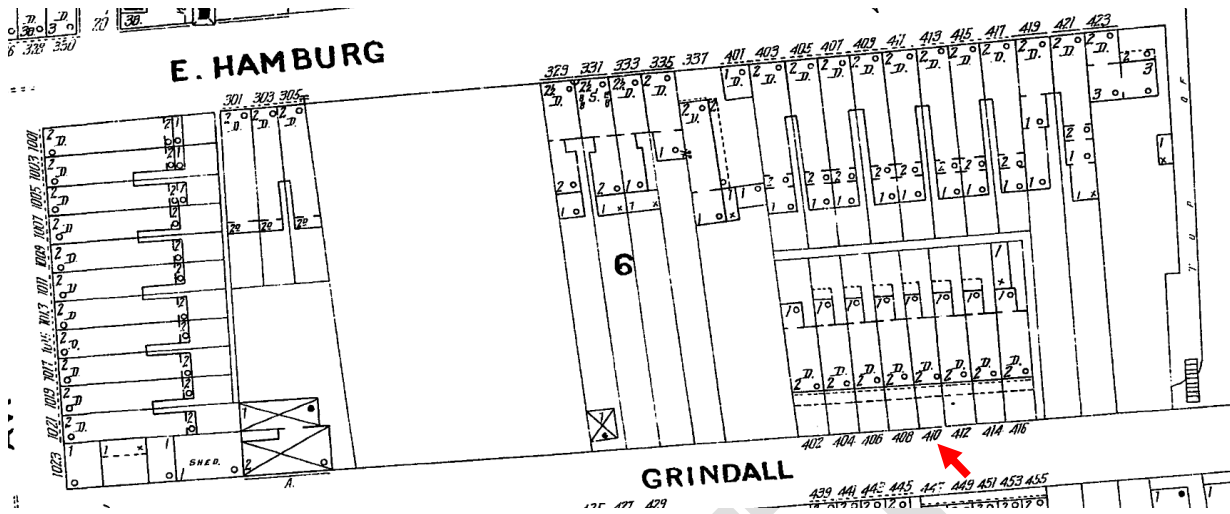


Image 7: 444 Grindall Street (at that time numbered 410), 1901-1902 Sanborn map

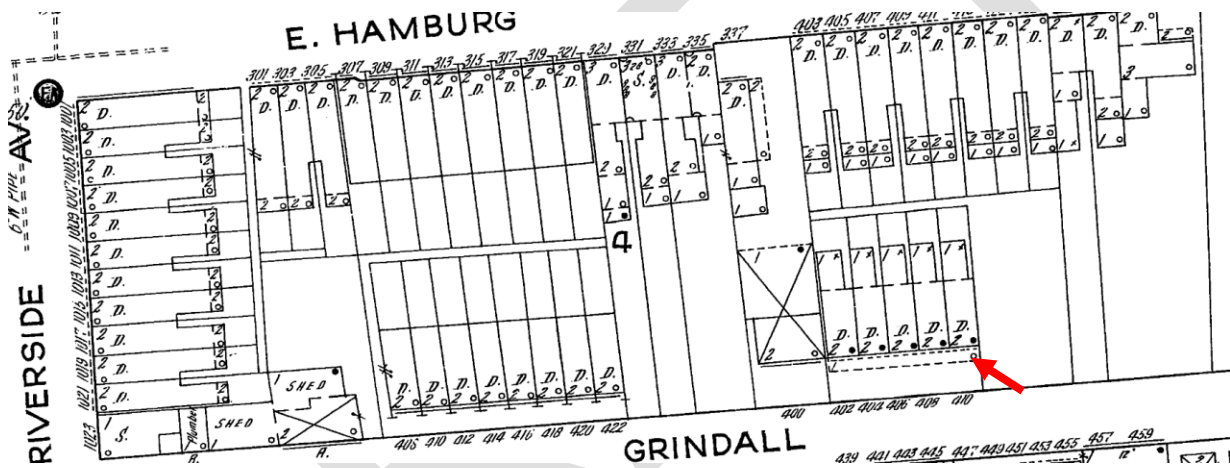


Image 8: 444 Grindall (at that time numbered 410), 1914-1915 Sanborn map

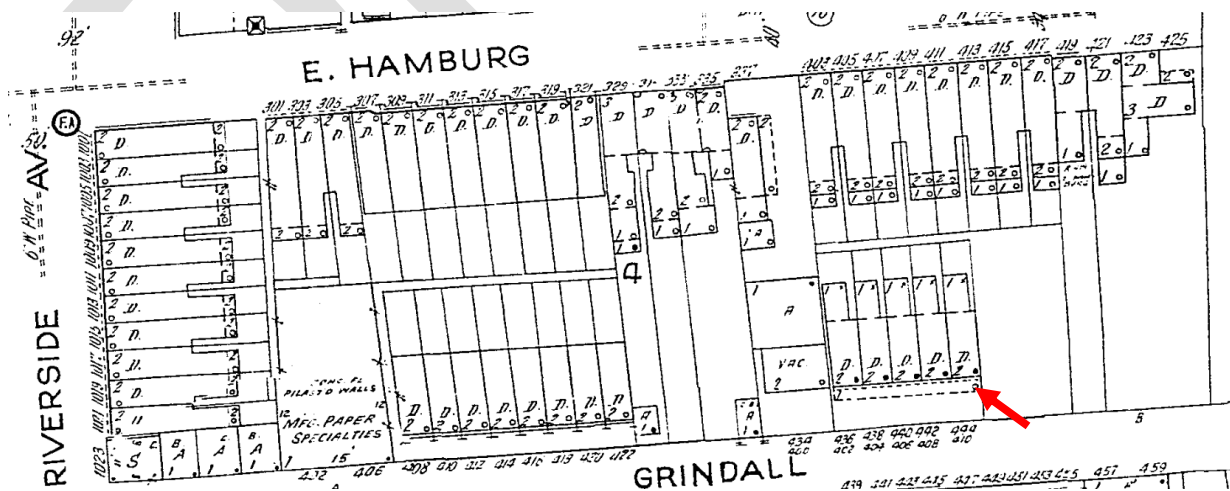


Image 9: 444 (410) Grindall, 1914-1953 Sanborn map



Image 10: 444 Grindall Street, rear elevation – Existing conditions



Image 11: 444 Grindall Street, rear elevation (left) – Existing conditions



Image 12: 444 Grindall Street, side (east) elevation – Existing conditions

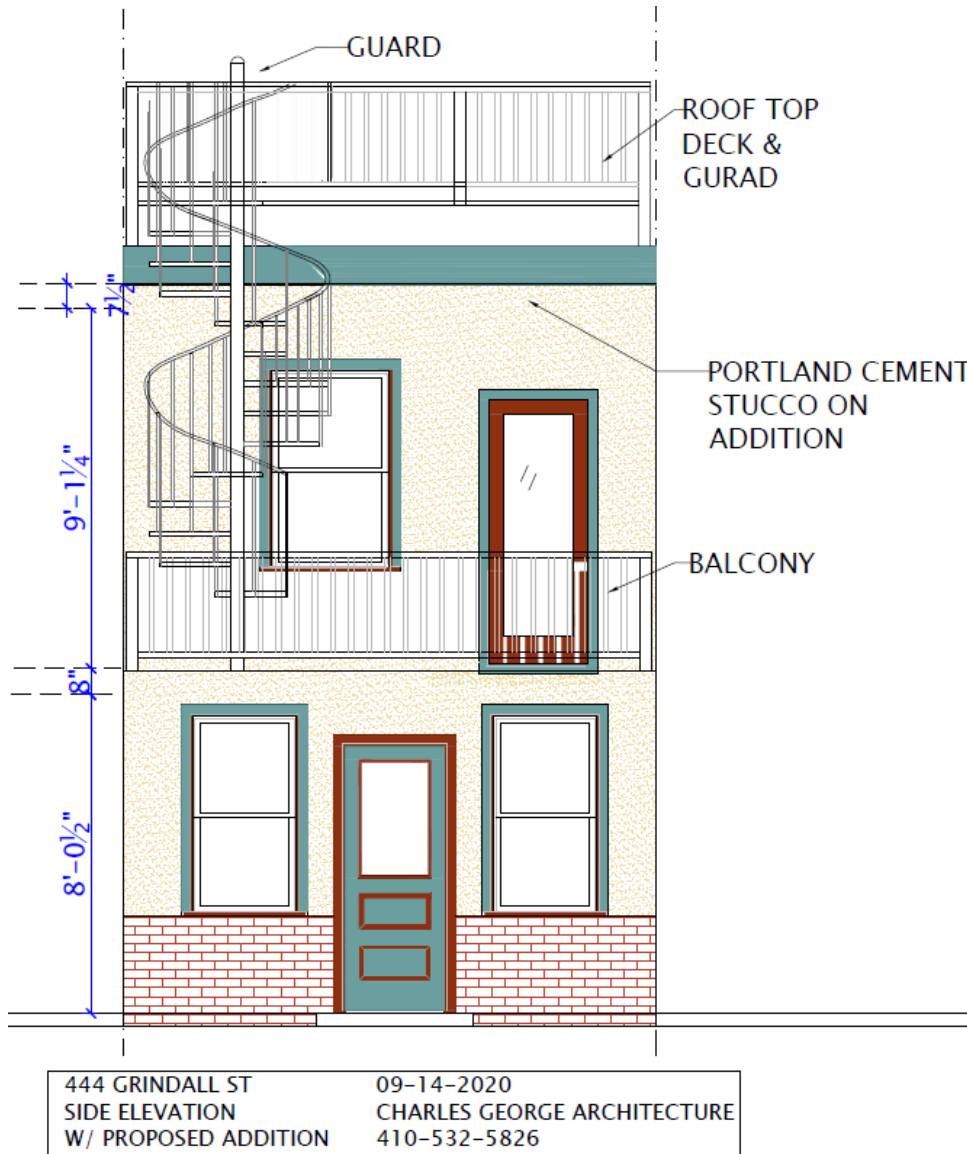


Image 13: 444 Grindall Street – Proposed rear elevation

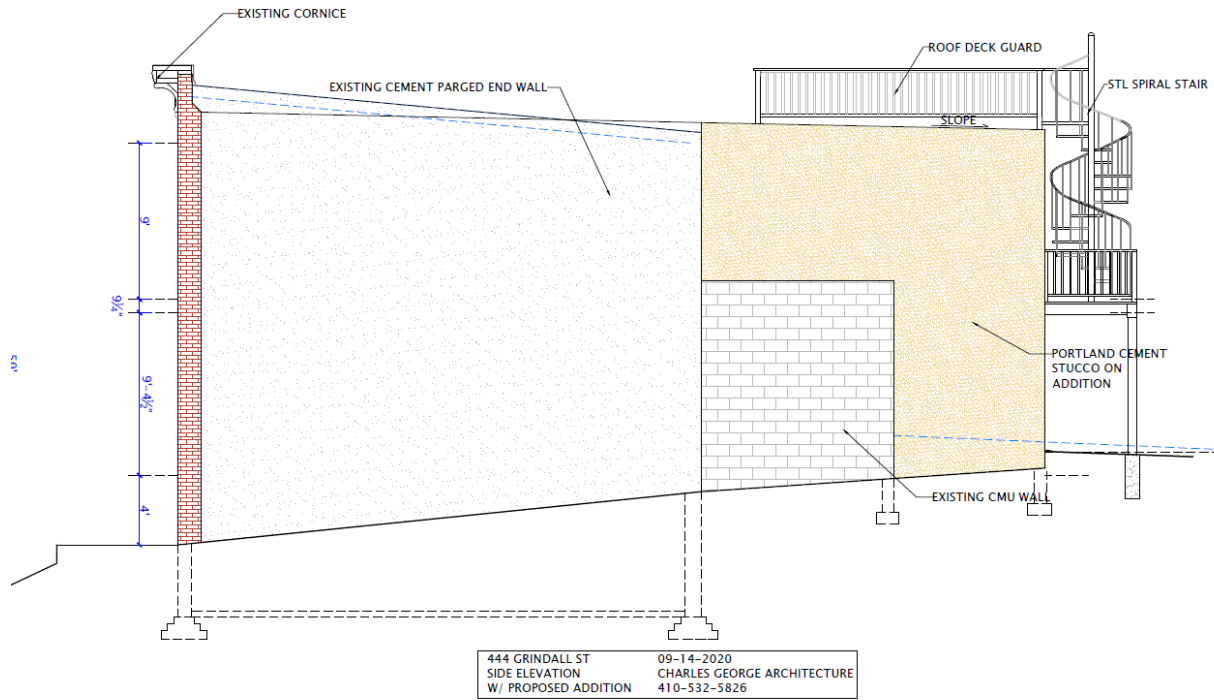


Image 14: 444 Grindall Street – Proposed side (east) elevation

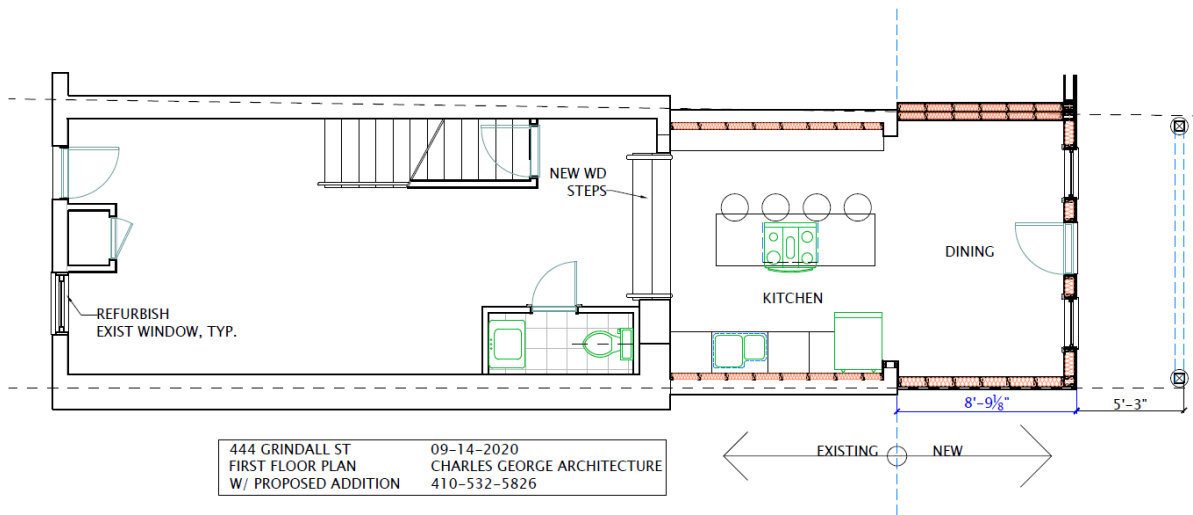


Image 15: 444 Grindall Street – First Floor Plan

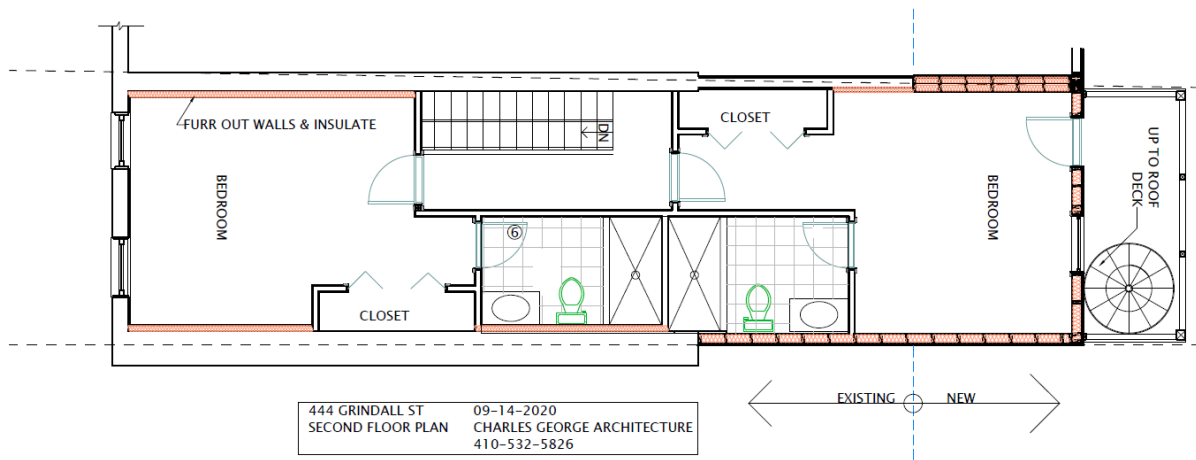


Image 16; 444 Grindall Street – Second floor plan

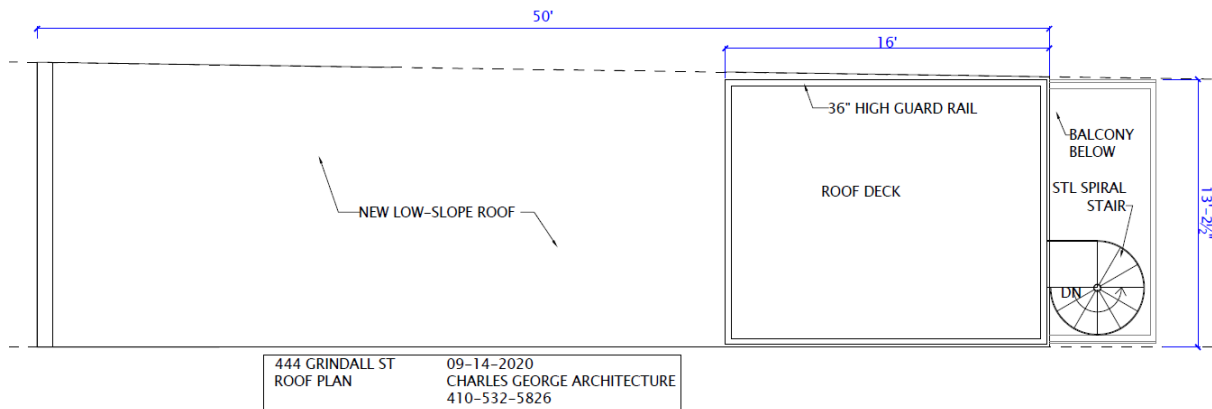


Image 17: 444 Grindall Street – Roof plan